

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF ISLAM

1.1 ISLAM AS PEACE AND SECURITY

Islam is a religion of peace and security, and it urges others to pursue the path of peace and protection. The most significant proof of this is that God has named it as Islam.¹ The word Islam is derived from the Arabic word *salama* or *salima*. It means peace, security, safety and protection. As for its literal meaning, Islam denotes absolute peace. As a religion, it is peace incarnate. It encourages humankind to be moderate, peaceful, kind, balanced, tolerant, patient and forbearing.

If we look for the definition of a Muslim or *mu'min* [believer] mentioned in the Qur'ān and hadith, it will become evident that, in the sight of God and His Messenger ﷺ, a Muslim is someone who embodies peace and security, and a *mu'min* is the one who is endowed with love, affection, peace, tranquillity, tolerance and coexistence, and upholds the cause of human dignity. Everyone is protected and safe from him at all levels, individually and collectively.

1.2 THE THREE LEVELS OF ISLAM

The Messenger of God ﷺ described three levels of religion: *Islām*, *Īmān* and *Iḥsān*. These are the levels of the religion applicable to actions, beliefs and inner spiritual states. All Islamic teachings revolve around these three levels, as proven by an agreed upon hadith.²

It is reported that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ said:

بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ إِذْ طَلَعَ عَلَيْنَا رَجُلٌ شَدِيدُ بَيَاضِ الثِّيَابِ،
شَدِيدُ سَوَادِ الشَّعْرِ، لَا يُرَى عَلَيْهِ أَثَرُ السَّفَرِ، وَلَا يَعْرِفُهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ، حَتَّى جَلَسَ إِلَيَّ

¹ God says: 'Truly, Islam is the only dīn [religion] in God's sight' [Qur'ān 3:19]; 'And I have chosen for you Islam as a dīn' [Qur'ān 5:3]; and 'He [God] has named you Muslims in the previous [Books] as well as in this [Qur'ān]' [Qur'ān 22:78].

² A hadith that is 'agreed upon' is a rigorously authentic narration reported
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النَّبِيِّ ﷺ، فَأَسْنَدَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ إِلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ، وَوَضَعَ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَى فَخْذَيْهِ، وَقَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ! أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتَقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ، وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ، وَتَحُجَّ الْبَيْتَ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا. قَالَ: صَدَقْتَ. قَالَ: فَعَجَبْنَا لَهُ يَسْأَلُهُ وَيُصَدِّقُهُ! قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ. قَالَ: أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ، وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ، وَكُتُبِهِ، وَرُسُلِهِ، وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ، وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ. قَالَ: صَدَقْتَ. قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ. قَالَ: أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ. قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ السَّاعَةِ. قَالَ: مَا الْمَسْئُولُ عَنْهَا بِأَعْلَمَ مِنَ السَّائِلِ. قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنْ أَمَارَتِهَا. قَالَ: أَنْ تَلِدَ الْأُمَّةُ رَبَّتَهَا، وَأَنْ تَرَى الْخُفَاءَ الْعُرَاةَ الْعَالَةَ رِعَاءَ الشَّيْءِ يَتَطَاوُلُونَ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ. ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ، فَلَبِثْتُ مَلِيًّا، ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا عُمَرُ، أَتَدْرِي مِنَ السَّائِلِ؟ قُلْتُ: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. قَالَ: فَإِنَّهُ جِبْرِيلُ أَتَاكُمْ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ دِينَكُمْ.

‘One day as we were sitting with the Messenger of God ﷺ, there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black. No signs of travel were seen upon him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the Prophet ﷺ. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said, “O Muhammad! Tell me about Islam”. The Messenger ﷺ said, “Islam is to bear witness that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and to perform the prayers, to give the alms, to fast in Ramaḍān and to make the pilgrimage to the House [the Ka‘ba in Mecca] if you are able”. The man said, “You have spoken truthfully”. We were amazed at him for asking the Prophet ﷺ a question and then saying that he had spoken truthfully. Then he said, “Then tell me about *Īmān*”. The Messenger ﷺ said, “*Īmān* is to believe in God, His Angels, His Books, His

Messengers, and the Last Day and to believe in Divine destiny, both its good and evil”. He said, “You have spoken truthfully”. Then he said, “Tell me about *Iḥsān*”. The Messenger ﷺ said, “It is to worship God as though you see Him, and if you don’t see Him, know that He sees you”. He said, “So tell me about the Final Hour”. The Messenger ﷺ said, “The one asked about it knows no better than the one asking”. He said, “So tell me about its signs”. The Messenger ﷺ said, “That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted, naked and destitute herdsmen competing in the construction of tall buildings”. Then the man left and I stayed for a time. The Prophet ﷺ then said, “O ‘Umar! Do you know who the questioner was?” I said, “God and His Messenger know best”. He ﷺ said, “It was Gabriel, who came to you to teach you your religion”.¹

Replying to Angel Gabriel’s question about Islam, the Prophet ﷺ described the basic practices of Islam; when asked about *Īmān*, he described the basic tenets of belief in the *dīn*; and when asked about *Iḥsān*, he described the inner states of the heart and the spiritual experiences pertaining to the *dīn*, which bring about the purification of the inner self, spiritual elevation and stability and strength in character and personality.

The details of these three levels of the *dīn* have been elucidated in a number of hadith reports. Similarly, God Most High revealed

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘On Gabriel’s Asking the Prophet ﷺ about *Īmān*, Islam, *Iḥsān* and Knowledge of the Final Hour’, 1:27 §50; Muslim in *Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘The Explanation of *Īmān*, Islam and *Iḥsān*’, 1:36 §8–9; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us Regarding Jibrīl’s Description of Faith and Islam to the Prophet ﷺ’, 5:6 §2601; Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Sunna* [The Book of the Sunna], chapter: ‘On the Divine Decree’, 4:222 §4695; al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Īmān wa sharā’i’uhu* [The Book of Faith and its Revealed Laws], chapter: ‘The Description of Islam’, 8:97 §4990; and Ibn Mājah in the introduction to *al-Sunan*, section: ‘Concerning Faith’, 1:24 §63.

details about these levels on different occasions in the Qur'ān. As for the first level, God says:

﴿أَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا﴾

'Today I have perfected your dīn for you, and have completed My Blessing upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as a dīn'.¹

Regarding the second level, God says:

﴿قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَامَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي

قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

'The Bedouins say, "We have believed". Say, "You have not believed. Rather say, 'We have accepted Islam', for true belief has not yet entered your hearts".²

And regarding the third level, God says:

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا

وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا﴾

'And with regard to dīn, who can be better than he who submits his whole being entirely to God while he also observes spiritual excellence?'³

Elsewhere in the Qur'ān, God Most High mentions these three levels together. He says:

﴿لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا

وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

'There is no sin on those who believe [have Īmān] and do righteous deeds with regard to what they have eaten [of the unlawful things before the prohibitions came],

¹ Qur'ān 5:3.

² Ibid., 49:14.

³ Ibid., 4:125.

*so long as they observed piety and possessed firm faith and practised pious deeds consistently, and later, [after the revelation of the prohibitions] they desisted from [unlawful things] and believed [with certainty regarding their unlawfulness], became people of piety and [finally] rose to the station of those of spiritual excellence [Iḥsān]. And God loves those who observe spiritual excellence’.*¹

If we consider the general meaning of the word Islam, we see that it refers to the *dīn* as a whole; however, if we reflect on a particular meaning of the word, we see that it denotes the basic—although significant—practices known as the ‘pillars of Islam’. It is these pillars that shape the Muslim’s individual and collective life into a practical mould. In the same way, the teachings of the religion that pertain to actions and commands fall under Islam. However, the teachings that pertain to beliefs and doctrine fall under *īmān*. They describe the theological aspect of human life. Consequently, the teachings of Islam bless us with lofty inner feelings of connection to God, and the spiritual states of heart converge on the third level of *dīn*, *Iḥsān*. These teachings purify Muslims morally and spiritually. The *mu’min*’s heart and inner self is developed and elevated, which is the main objective of Islam and *īmān*.

Let us now discuss these three levels, one by one, and explain their literal and lexical meanings. This will, in turn, demonstrate that these three levels imply peace, security and protection.

1.3 ON THE LITERAL MEANING OF THE WORD ISLAM

The word *Islam* is derived from the root words *salima*, *yaslamu*, *salāman* and *salāmatan*, as well as other variations. God says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَذْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَافَّةً﴾

‘O believers! Enter Islam (Ar. *silm*) perfectly and wholly’.²

¹ Ibid., 5:93.

² Ibid., 2:208.

The famous philologist, Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī, interpreted the word *silīm* as Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said,

الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

‘The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe’.¹

Embracing Islam, therefore, means to enter the door of peace and protection, until people become safe from his harm and evil. According to Abū Maṣṣūr Muhammad al-Azhārī, Abū Ishāq al-Zujāj narrated from Muhammad b. Yazīd in *Tahdhīb al-lughā* who interpreted the Qur’ānic verse,

﴿فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ﴾

‘Say, “Peace be upon you!” Your Lord has made Mercy incumbent upon Himself’.²

In Arabic, the word *salām* has four meanings. Firstly, *salām* is the verbal noun of *salima* (to be free of blemish). Secondly, it is the plural form of *salāma* (safety and security). Thirdly, it is one of the beautiful names of Almighty God (al-Salām, the Flawless). And fourthly, it is a tree which is shady and evergreen.

According to al-Zujāj, *salām* comes from *sallama*, which denotes supplication for man to remain safe and secure from hardships and troubles. It implies deliverance from miseries and disasters.³

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘The Muslim is He from Whose Tongue and Hand the Muslims Are Safe’, 1:13 §10; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘Explaining the Ranks of Virtue within Islam and which of its Affairs are Most Virtuous’, 1:65 §41; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us Concerning the Fact That the Muslim is He from Whose Tongue and Hand the Muslims Are Safe’, 5:17 §2627; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 3:440 §15673; and Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:406 §180.

² Qur’ān 6:54.

³ Muhammad Al-Azhārī, *Tahdhīb al-lughā*, 4:292.

Paradise has also been named the Abode of Peace (*Dār al-Salām*) because it will be free from death and extinction. No one dwelling in it will be in danger or exposed to any malady. It will be a home exclusively permeated with calmness and tranquillity, pleasure and protection, peace and security. No fear, grief, pain or remorse will touch any of its inhabitants. God says,

﴿لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلَامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ﴾

*‘For them is the home of peace and security with their Lord’.*¹

God also says,

﴿وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوا إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ﴾

*‘And God calls towards the Abode of Peace’.*²

Dār al-Salām means the abode of *salāma* (safety and protection), because true safety will be available only in Paradise. It is blessed with permanence that will not face extinction. It provides honour that will not see any humiliation and its health has no decay. According to Imam al-Aṣḥānī, *salām* and *salāma* denote freedom from all known and hidden troubles. God says,

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ﴾

*‘But he alone [will enter Paradise] who appears before God with a sound [salīm] heart [protected from evils]’.*³

The sound heart is a heart free of tyranny and violence. Security, therefore, is related to the inner self. When God says regarding the heifer in the story of the Children of Israel,

﴿مُسَلَّمَةً لَا شِئَةَ فِيهَا﴾

*‘Sound without any blemish’.*⁴

¹ Qur’ān 6:127.

² Ibid., 10:25.

³ Ibid., 26:89.

⁴ Ibid., 2:71.

the soundness implied is physical and external. In other verses, peace, security and protection have been mentioned:

﴿وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ﴾

‘But God saved [sallam]’;¹

﴿ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ ءَامِنِينَ﴾

‘Enter them with peace [bi salām] and security’;²

﴿اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِّنَّا﴾

‘Get down [from the Ark] with peace [bi salām] and blessings from Us’;³

﴿يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ﴾

‘By this God guides those who seek His pleasure to the paths of peace [subul al-salām]’;⁴

﴿وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا﴾

‘When the ignorant people say to them something [with bad words] they reply back with mild words and gentleness [salāman]’;⁵

﴿سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِّن رَّبِّ رَحِيمٍ﴾

“‘Peace [be upon you]!’ This greeting will be conveyed [to them] from the Ever-Merciful Lord’;⁶

﴿سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ﴾

‘Peace be upon you as a reward for your patience’.⁷

¹ Ibid., 8:43.

² Ibid., 15:46.

³ Ibid., 11:48.

⁴ Ibid., 5:16.

⁵ Ibid., 25:63.

⁶ Ibid., 36:58.

⁷ Ibid., 13:24.

These verses provide the proof for the first lexical meaning of Islam. They also illustrate that every noun or verb derived from Islam, and every derivative or word conjugated from it, essentially denotes peace, protection, security and safety.

God Most High has also mentioned al-Salām as one of His beautiful names, for He is flawless and free of any shortcoming. Due to its being one of God's beautiful names, this word reflects all the shades of peace, beauty, betterment and goodness. It totally negates all forms of mischief and strife as well. For this reason, the salutation of peace is a distinctive greeting between Muslims, which identifies them as such. Whenever two Muslims meet, they invoke peace on each other, wish security and safety and deliver the message of calmness and tranquillity. They also wish each other protection from every evil, mischief, violence and strife. The ritual prayer performed by Muslims is completed by turning the face right and left, invoking peace on all the Muslims.

Furthermore, a green tree is another meaning of the word Islam. The two famous Arabic lexicons, *Lisān al-ʿArab* and *Tahdhīb al-lughā*, quote the saying of Imam Abū Ḥanifa:

السَّلَامُ هُوَ شَجَرٌ عَظِيمٌ وَهُوَ أَبَدًا أَخْضَرُ.

‘Al-Salām is a magnificent evergreen tree’.¹

The Imams of the Arabic lexicons maintain that calling an evergreen tree *al-salām* is based on the linguistic meaning of the word. It is a tree safe from decay and the vicissitudes of autumn, so it is called *al-salām*. According to Ibn Barrī, this tree is called *salm* and *salām* is its plural form. It is so named because it is evergreen and shady. This implies that everything providing shade, benefit, peace and security will be conceived as *silm*, *salm* and *salām*. Moreover, a ladder is called *sullam* in Arabic. According to al-Zujāj,

السُّلَّمُ سُمِّيَ سُلْمًا لِأَنَّهُ يُسَلَّمُكَ إِلَى حَيْثُ تُرِيدُ.

‘A ladder is called *sullam*, because it takes one safe and

¹ Ibn Manẓūr al-Afrīqī, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 12:297.

sound wherever one wants to climb’.¹

All other methods of climbing without a ladder or staircase, like jumping, would end up in some fall, injury or even loss of life. However, by taking a ladder to climb, one becomes safe and protected from threats and dangers. As it provides safety and protection, a ladder is called *sullam* in Arabic. There is a mention of a ladder in the Qur’ān as well:

﴿أَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاءِ﴾

‘[They should seek] *some ladder* [climbing up] *to heaven*’.²

According to Ibn Manẓūr, the author of *Lisān al-‘Arab*,

السُّلَّمُ هُوَ الدَّلْوُ الْعَظِيمَةُ.

‘*Al-Sullam* means a large bucket’.³

A bucket is a means of fetching water from a well, and before the advent of machines, people would draw water from wells by means of buckets. But why is a bucket called *al-sullam*? It is because people quench their thirst by drawing water with its help. The needy fetch water and take it home to store for use. In the old days, people used it for water required for ablution and bathing. Due to its usefulness and life-giving utility, it has been given the name *al-sullam*. Water is the fountainhead of life, irrigation, coolness, calm, pleasantness, vegetation and greenery. The means of fetching it, therefore, is called *al-sullam* because it is a means of peace and survival.

The lexical and literal meanings of the word Islam illustrate that it inherently means peace, security, protection, safety and safeguard. In other words, Islam implies safety from violence and killing and also means protection and security. There is no room in Islam for strife, mass murder, destruction, anarchy and chaos. That is why all its aspects negate extremism and terrorism.

¹ Ibid., 12:299.

² Qur’ān 6:35.

³ Ibn Manẓūr al-Afrīqī, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 12:201.

Consequently, it guarantees prosperity, betterment, positive progress, peace, security, protection and development. Therefore, a person exhibiting conduct contrary to the basic meaning of the word Islam has no link at all with *dīn*.

In addition to the Qur'ānic verses, there are prophetic traditions that emphasize the lexical meaning of Islam. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

'The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe'.¹

Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه also said, 'I asked the Prophet ﷺ, "What kind of [person's] Islam is best?" He said,

مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

"The one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe!".²

Through the reply of the Prophet ﷺ in this hadith, he has removed the objection of some people, who question, 'Whose Islam should we accept and whose Islam should we reject?' He ﷺ

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: 'The Muslim is He from Whose Tongue and Hand the Muslims Are Safe', 1:13 §10; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: 'Explaining the Ranks of Virtue within Islam and which of its Affairs are Most Virtuous', 1:65 §41; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: 'What Has Come to Us Concerning the Fact That the Muslim is He from Whose Tongue and Hand the Muslims Are Safe', 5:17 §2627; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 3:440 §15673; and Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:406 §180.

² Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: 'The Muslim is He from Whose Tongue and Hand the Muslims Are Safe', 1:13 §10; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: 'Explaining the Ranks of Virtue within Islam and which of its Affairs are Most Virtuous', 1:65 §41; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 3:372 §15037, 2:112 §16027; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 11:579 §5176; Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 8:320 §26497; al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:55 §26; and 'Abd al-Razzāq in *al-Muṣannaf*, 11:127 §20107.

provided a crystal clear vision of Islam and said that the best Islam is of those from whose hands and tongues all humans are safe. They uphold the banner of peaceful coexistence, love, tolerance, moderation, forbearance and interfaith harmony. Conversely, if someone becomes an extremist and adopts hatred, prejudice, disunity, chaos and coercion, and kills peaceful citizens as a means to preach and enforce *dīn*, his claim to be a Muslim cannot be accepted—even if he appears outwardly as a devout worshipper—because the basic criterion given by the Prophet ﷺ to judge true Islam is peace and security.

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما said, ‘A man asked the Messenger of God ﷺ, “What kind of Islam is best?” The Prophet ﷺ replied,

تُطْعِمُ الطَّعَامَ، وَتَقْرَأُ السَّلَامَ عَلَى مَنْ عَرَفْتَ وَمَنْ لَمْ تَعْرِفْ.

“That you serve food and give the salutation of peace to the one whom you know and the one whom you do not know”.¹

According to Jābir رضي الله عنه the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

‘The most complete of the believers is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe’.²

According to Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ. لَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يُسْلِمُهُ، مَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ، وَمَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ مُسْلِمٍ كُرْبَةً فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبَاتٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘Serving Food is a Part of Islam’, 1:13 §12, and in chapter: ‘Spreading Salutations of Peace is from Islam’, 1:19 §28; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘Explaining the Ranks of Virtue within Islam and which of its Affairs Entail Half of It’, 1:65 §39.

² Narrated by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:54 §23; and Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:426 §197.

‘The Muslim is the brother of his fellow Muslim. He does not wrong him or leave him helpless. Whoever attends to his brother’s need, God will attend to his need. If someone relieves a Muslim of a distress in the world, God will relieve him of one of the distresses of the Day of Resurrection. And if someone covers the fault of a Muslim, God will cover his faults on the Day of Resurrection’.¹

According to Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ. لَا يَظْلِمُهُ، وَلَا يَخْذُلُهُ، وَلَا يَحْقِرُهُ، اتَّقَوْا هَاهُنَا (وَيُشِيرُ إِلَى صَدْرِهِ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ). يَحْسِبُ امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ الشَّرِّ أَنْ يَحْقِرَ أَخَاهُ الْمُسْلِمَ. كُلُّ الْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ حَرَامٌ، دَمُهُ، وَمَالُهُ، وَعَرَضُهُ.

‘The Muslim is the brother of a fellow Muslim; he does not wrong him, abandon him or look down upon him. Piety [*taqwā*] is right here [and the Prophet ﷺ pointed to his blessed chest thrice]. It is evil enough for a Muslim to look down upon his brother Muslim. The Muslim’s blood, property and honour are forbidden for the other Muslim’.²

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-maẓālim* [The Book of Wrongdoings], chapter: ‘The Muslim Does Not Wrong or Forsake a Fellow Muslim’, 2:862 §2310; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], chapter: ‘On the Prohibition of Oppression’, 4:1996 §2580; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-ḥudūd* [The Book of Prescribed Punishments], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us Concerning the Hiding of a Muslim’s Faults’, 4:34 §1426; and Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘On Brotherhood’, 4:273 §4893.

² Narrated by Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], chapter: *The Prohibition of Wronging a Muslim or Deserting Him, Despising Him, His Goods, His Blood and His Wealth*, 4:1986 §2564; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:277 §7713; ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd in *al-Musnad*, 1:420 §1442; and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 6:92 §11276, and in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 5:280 §6660.

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According to ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه the Prophet ﷺ said,
 سَبُّ الْمُسْلِمِ فُسُوقٌ، وَقِتَالُهُ كُفْرٌ.

‘Reviling a Muslim is immorality, and fighting him is disbelief’.¹

According to this hadith, using foul words and abusive language against someone is corruption, and fighting and killing amounts to disbelief; how worse it would be to take up arms and kill civilians?

1.4 ISLAM MEANS SAFETY FOR ALL OF HUMANITY

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,
 الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

‘The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand all people are safe’.²

Imam Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal narrated in his *Musnad* from ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه who reported that a man said, ‘O Messenger of God! What [person’s] Islam is best?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied,

مَنْ سَلِمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘On the Muslim’s Fear That His Deeds Might be in Vain, Without His Being Aware’, 1:27 §48; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘Explanation of the Prophet’s Saying ﷺ, “Reviling A Muslim is Immorality and Fighting Him is Disbelief”’, 1:81 §64; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and Filial Duty], chapter 52, 4:353 §1983; al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb taḥrīm al-dam* [The Book on the Prohibition of Bloodshed], chapter: ‘On Fighting A Muslim’, 7:121 §4105; and Ibn Mājah in the introduction to his *al-Sunan*, section: ‘On Faith’, 1:27 §69.

² Narrated by al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Īmān wa sharā’i’uhu* [The Book of Faith and its Revealed Laws], chapter: ‘The Quality of the True Believer’, 8:104 §4995, and in his *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 6:530 §11726; Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-fitan* [The Book of Tribulations], chapter: ‘The Sanctity of a Believer’s Blood and Property’, 2:1298 §3934; and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:379 §8918.

‘The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe’.¹

Imam al-Ṭabarānī has also narrated from ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr who said that a man asked the Prophet ﷺ, ‘O Messenger of God! Whose Islam is best?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied,

مَنْ سَلِمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

‘The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe’.²

Using the word ‘*al-nās*’ in some of these hadith reports, the Prophet ﷺ indicated that a Muslim or *mu’min* is the one from whom everyone’s life and property are safe and secure—without any discrimination based on faith and creed. Therefore, a person who does not consider human dignity worth any regard, and treads the path of violence, bloodshed and strife, cannot be a *mu’min*, despite his devout worship and pious efforts. If someone keeps a beard and glorifies God day and night, offers prayers five times a day, keeps fasts, observes night vigil prayers, performs Hajj and visitation every year in addition to his preaching—yet despite all that, the lives and properties of others are unsafe and insecure from him, none of his deeds will save him from the torment of God. True prosperity depends on a heart protected from mischief and tyranny,³ not solely on outward acts of worship. The Prophet ﷺ said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ، وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ.

‘God does not observe your forms and your properties, but He does observe your hearts and your deeds’.⁴

¹ Narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:187 §6753.

² Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-awsaṭ*, 3:287 §3170.

³ Qur’ān 26:89.

⁴ Narrated by Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Prohibition of Wronging a Muslim, Deserting Him, Scorning Him, Shedding His Blood and Assaulting His Honour and Property’, 4:1987 §2564; and Aḥmad b. Screen View Only—Click to get a hard copy: <http://www.MinhajPublications.com>

If the inner self does not undergo any change and remains brutal, one cannot deceive God by adorning oneself with the outward trappings of piety and goodness.

1.5 ON THE LITERAL MEANING OF THE WORD *ĪMĀN*

According to al-Liḥiyānī, the word *īmān* is derived from *amina*, *ya'manu*, *amnan* and *amanan*, *amānatan* and *amanatan*. This word also indicates peace and protection. Abū Maṣṣūr Muhammad al-Azhārī quoted Abū Zayd in *Tahdhīb al-lughā*: 'So-and-so provided shelter [*āmāna*] to the enemy, so the enemy felt safe [*amina*], and is thus protected [*mu'man*]'.¹

This is *īmān*, or the providing of safety. When an enemy has been provided with protection, he will be called *mu'man* [passive participle], while the provider of shelter will be called *mu'min* [active participle]. Similarly, the Qur'ān has taken an oath by Mecca calling it '*the city of peace*'.² In it, the word *amīn* has been used to imply *ma'mūn* (the object of safety).

Peace is the opposite of fear. Al-Amīn is also one of the beautiful names of God, as reported by the exegete al-Mujāhid, while al-Mu'min is one of His beautiful names mentioned in the Qur'ān. Both, however, mean the same thing: the One Who provides shelter to His friends. The Qur'ān says,

﴿فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ. الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ﴾

'So they should worship the Lord of this Sacred House [the Ka'ba], Who has fed them in hunger and secured them from fear'.³

Īmān and *amāna* are transitive as well as intransitive. *Mu'min*, therefore, has two meanings: the one who attains peace and the provider of peace. The sanctuary of Mecca has been mentioned in the Qur'ān:

Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:258.

¹ Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Afrīqī, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 13:21.

² Qur'ān 95:3.

³ Ibid., 106:3-4.

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا﴾

‘And have they not seen that We have made the Sanctuary [of the Ka‘ba] a safe haven?’¹

It also says about the Sacred House of God,

﴿وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمِنًا﴾

‘And [remember] when We made this House [the Ka‘ba] a central place for mankind to turn to [and assemble] and a sanctuary for peace’.²

Abū Ishāq al-Zujāj ruled that the words *āmin*, *amin* and *amīn* all share the same meaning. The stars have been called *amana* in the prophetic traditions, implying that they are the security of the heavens. When they collide, the Day of Resurrection will begin and the universe will perish. The Prophet ﷺ said,

النُّجُومُ أَمْنَةُ السَّمَاءِ، فَإِذَا ذَهَبَتِ النُّجُومُ أَتَى السَّمَاءُ مَا تُوعَدُ.

‘The stars are the source of security for the heavens, and when they go the heavens will receive what has been promised it’.

Similarly, the Messenger of God ﷺ called himself the security of his Companions:

أَنَا أَمْنَةٌ لِأَصْحَابِي، فَإِذَا ذَهَبْتُ أَتَى أَصْحَابِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ.

‘I am the source of security for my Companions. When I [physically] leave the world that which was promised them [disruptions, rebellions and hostilities] will come’.

That is exactly what happened and, consequently, the Rightly Guided Caliphs and thousands of other Companions were martyred. Then the Prophet ﷺ said,

أَصْحَابِي أَمْنَةٌ لِأُمَّتِي، فَإِذَا ذَهَبْتُ أَصْحَابِي أَتَى أُمَّتِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ.

¹ Ibid., 29:67.

² Ibid., 2:125.

‘My Companions are a source of security for my *Umma*. When they leave my *Umma* will receive what was promised it’.¹

That is how the word *amana* has been used to denote peace and protection. This word and all its derivatives relate to peace and protection. That is why if someone acts contrary to the way of peace and security and spreads terror, he has no link with *Īmān*.

This linguistic analysis of the meanings of Islam and *Īmān* fully reveals that both levels of *dīn* demand peace, protection and security in every matter. Whatever action is performed to destroy peace—under any slogan, and with whatever justification fabricated to prove it valid—cannot be in the fold of either Islam or *Īmān*; rather, it will be in conflict with them. That is why the Prophet ﷺ declared *Īmān* conditional upon peace, protection and security.

The beloved Messenger of God ﷺ blessed the *Umma* with countless exhortations and instructions drawn from the linguistic reality of *Īmān*, so that all Muslims become embodiments of love and affection, tolerance and forbearance, human dignity and mercy and clemency. If these instructions are applied, society entire will become a haven of peace and calmness, security and protection, ease and comfort.

Jābir رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ.

‘The most complete of the believers is he from whose tongue and whose hand the Muslims are safe’.²

Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ. يَشُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا (وَشَبَكَ بَيْنَ أَصَابِعِهِ).

¹ Narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 4:398 §19584.

² Narrated by al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:54 §23 and Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:426 §197.

‘The believer is to another believer like an edifice, each part of it strengthens the other’, and he interlaced his fingers to illustrate this.¹

Al-Nu‘mān b. al-Bashīr رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادُّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ. إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى.

‘In their mutual love, mercy and compassion, the true believers are like the physical body. If one of its organs is afflicted with pain, the rest of the body rallies to it with sleeplessness and fever’.²

According to Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا، وَخَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِسَانِهِمْ.

‘The most complete of the believers in faith is the finest of them in moral character, and the best of you are those

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-maẓālim* [The Book of Oppression], chapter: ‘Assisting the Oppressed’, 2:863 §2314; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Mutual Compassion of the Muslims, Their Mutual Affection and Their Mutual Support’, 4:1999 §2585; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and Filial Duty], chapter: ‘What Has Been Reported Concerning the Muslim’s Compassion for a fellow Muslim’, 4:325 §1928; and al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Zakāt* [The Book of Zakat], chapter: ‘The Remuneration of the Treasurer When He Gives Charitable Donations with His Master’s Permission’, 5:79 §2560.

² Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘Compassion for People and Their Livestock’, 5:2238 §5665; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Mutual Compassion of the Muslims, Their Mutual Affection and Their Mutual Support’, 4:1999 §2586; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 4:270; al-Bazzār in *al-Musnad*, 8:238 §3299; and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 3:353 §6223, and *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 6:481 §8985.

who are the kindest towards your womenfolk’.¹

‘Abd Allāh رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

لَيْسَ الْمُؤْمِنُ بِالطَّعَانِ وَلَا اللَّعَانِ وَلَا الْفَاحِشِ وَلَا الْبَذِيِّ.

‘The true believer is not a defamer or curser or one given to vulgarities and obscenities’.²

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said, ‘I saw the Messenger of God ﷺ circumambulating around the Ka‘ba and addressing it, saying,

مَا أَطْيَبِكَ وَأَطْيَبَ رِيْحَكَ! مَا أَعْظَمَكَ وَأَعْظَمَ حُرْمَتَكَ! وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ،
لِحُرْمَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَعْظَمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ حُرْمَةً مِنْكَ مَالِهِ وَدَمِهِ، وَأَنْ نَظُنَّ بِهِ إِلَّا خَيْرًا.

“How excellent you are and how sweet your smell is!
How grand you are and how grand your sacredness is!
By the One in Whose Hand is Muhammad’s soul, the
inviolability of a believer’s property and blood is greater
in the sight of God than your sacredness. We must think
only well of a believer”.³

Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

ثَلَاثٌ مِنْ أَخْلَاقِ الْإِيمَانِ: مَنْ إِذَا غَضِبَ لَمْ يُدْخِلْهُ غَضَبُهُ فِي بَاطِلٍ، وَمَنْ إِذَا رَضِيَ
لَمْ يُخْرِجْهُ رِضَاهُ مِنْ حَقٍّ، وَمَنْ إِذَا قَدَرَ لَمْ يَتَعَاطَ مَا لَيْسَ لَهُ.

¹ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-raḍā‘a* [The Book of Suckling], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us About the Wife’s Right upon Her Husband’, 3:466 §1162; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:472 §10110; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:227 §479; al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:43 §2; al-Dārimī in *al-Sunan*, 2:415 §2792; and Abū Ya‘lā in *al-Musnad*, 7:237 §4240.

² Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and Filial Duty], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us About Cursing’, 4:350 §1977; al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-mufrad*, p. 116 §312 and 332; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:421 §192; and al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:57 §29.

³ Narrated by Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-fitan* [The Book of Tribulations], chapter: ‘The Inviolability of a Believer’s Blood and Property’, 2:1297 §3932; al-Ṭabarānī in *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn*, 2:396 §1568; and al-Mundhīrī in *al-Targhīb wa al-tarhīb*, 3:201 §3679.

‘There are three characteristics of faith: if someone is angry, his anger does not lead him to commit an evil act; if someone is pleased, his pleasure does not cause him to depart from the truth; and if someone is powerful, he does not engage in that which is not his right’.¹

1.6 ĪMĀN MEANS SAFETY FOR ALL OF HUMANITY

Imam al-Nasā’ī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal reported from Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

الْمُؤْمِنُ مَنْ أَمِنَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَى دِمَائِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ.

‘The true believer [*mu’min*] is he whom people trust with regard to their blood and their properties’.²

Fuḍāla b. ‘Ubayd رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said during his Farewell Pilgrimage,

الْمُؤْمِنُ مَنْ أَمِنَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ.

‘The true believer [*mu’min*] is he whom people trust with regard to their lives and their properties’.³

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُوْذِ جَارُهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يَكْرِمُ صَیْقَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ.

‘He who believes in God and the Last Day, let him

¹ Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-ṣaghīr*, 1:114 §164; al-Daylamī in *al-Firdaws bi maʿthūr al-khiṭāb*, 2:87 §2466; Ibn Rajab in *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa al-ḥikam*, 1:148; and al-Haythamī in *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid*, 1:59.

² Narrated by al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Īmān wa sharāʾiʿuhu* [The Book of Faith and its Revealed Laws], chapter: ‘The Quality of the True Believer’, 8:104 §4995; and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:379 §8918.

³ Narrated by Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-fitan* [The Book of Tribulations], chapter: ‘The Sanctity of the Believer’s Blood and Property’, 2:1298 §3934; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 6:21 §24004; al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:54 §24; and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-awsat*, 1:81 §232.

abstain from harming his neighbour; he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; and he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him say that which is good, or remain silent’.¹

Abū Shurayḥ رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said,

وَاللّٰهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ، وَاللّٰهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ، وَاللّٰهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ.

‘By God, he does not truly believe! By God, he does not truly believe! By God, he does not truly believe!’

Someone asked, ‘Who, O Messenger of God?’ He said:

الَّذِي لَا يَأْمَنُ جَارُهُ بَوَائِقَهُ.

‘He whose neighbour is not safe from his hurtful behaviour’.²

This concept is also validated by the hadith,

لَا إِيمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ.

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘If Someone Believes in God and the Last Day, He Must Not Harm His Neighbour’, 5:2240 §5672, and *Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘Honouring the Guest and Serving Him Personally’, 5:2273 §5785, and *Kitāb al-riqāq* [The Book of Heart-softening Narrations], chapter: ‘Safeguarding the Tongue’, 5:2376 §6110; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘Urging Piety for the Neighbour and the Guest, and the Necessity of Maintaining Silence Except when Having Something Good to Say’, 1:6968 §§47–48; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Manners], chapter 50, 4:659 §2500; Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Rightful Due to the Neighbour’, 4:339 §5154; and Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Right Due to the Neighbour’, 2:1211 §3672.

² Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Sin of Someone Whose Neighbour is Not Safe from His Mischief’, 5:2240 §5670; Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘Explanation of the Prohibition of Harming the Neighbour’, 1:68 §46; al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:53 §21; and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 22:187 §487.

‘He who is untrustworthy has no faith’.¹

For that reason, when someone asked the Messenger of God ﷺ, ‘Who is a believer?’ he replied,

مَنْ اُتْمَنَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَى اَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ.

‘[The believer is he] whom people trust with their property and their persons’.²

This is the lowest level denoted by the word *Īmān*. The Prophet ﷺ made it a precondition for one to attain good character:

مَا اَمَنَ بِي مَنْ بَاتَ شَبْعَانًا وَجَارُهُ جَائِعٌ.

‘If someone spends the night satiated while his neighbour is hungry, he has not believed in me’.³

1.7 ON THE LITERAL MEANING OF THE WORD *IḤSĀN*

The word *Iḥsān* is the verbal noun of the triliteral verb *ḥasanah*, *yaḥsunu*, *ḥusnan*. It means beauty, balance, betterment, benevolence, piety and goodness. It is the opposite of ugliness and evil, sin and vice and bad deeds. The antonym of *Iḥsān* is *isā’a*, which means the same thing as ugliness.

In *Tahdhīb al-luġha* Imam Abū Maṣṣūr Muhammad al-Azhārī quoted the saying of al-Layth al-Shaybānī regarding the basic meaning of *Iḥsān*. Regarding the verse:

﴿وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا﴾

¹ Narrated by Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:422 §194; Ibn Khuzayma in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:51; al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 4:97; Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 6:159; and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 8:195.

² Narrated by Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-fitan* [The Book of Tribulations], chapter: ‘The Inviolability of a Believer’s Blood and Property’, 2:1298 §3934 and recorded by Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Afrīqī in *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 13:24.

³ Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 1:259 §751; and al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 2:15.

‘*And speak with goodness [ḥusnan] to people*’,¹

Al-Layth said that it means to say good and pleasant words to others. Al-Zujāj also maintained that it is to talk to people in a nice manner and possess beauty, goodness and benevolence, because *ḥasīn* has been derived from *ḥasuna*, as ‘*aẓīm* is from ‘*aẓuma* and *karīm* is from *karuma*. Al-Mundhirī reported from Abū al-Haytham that the words *ḥusnan* and *ḥasanan* both imply a beautiful thing. It points to beauty in everything, whether in utterance or action, moral acts or general behaviour. The divine command is to be nice and refined not only in conversation but in general behaviour. One must interact with others cordially, piously, and with a sentiment of well-wishing, goodness and beauty.

This word has also been employed as a command for benevolent and beautiful behaviour with parents. God Most High says,

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا﴾

‘*And We have enjoined man to behave benevolently with his parents*’.²

The intention of this divine decree is to teach us that we should speak nicely to our parents, treat them with refined conduct and behave with them in every matter with beauty, kindness, good manners, love and affection, and that under no circumstances should we be harsh with them. This entire manner of behaviour and conduct is called *Iḥsān*. The Qur’ān has further made it easy:

﴿وَيَذَرُونِ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ﴾

‘*And they repel evil by means of good*’.³

The *mu’min* and *muḥsin* repel evil with good, and vice with virtue. They respond to what is painful with pleasant behaviour. Similarly, the Qur’ān has mentioned another divine principle:

¹ Qur’ān 2:83.

² Ibid., 29:8.

³ Ibid., 13:22.

﴿إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ﴾

‘Surely, good actions remove the evil actions’.¹

Spiritually, the impact of pious deeds is so strong that they eliminate evil deeds, and the acts of *Iḥsān* defeat wrongs and render sins into nothingness. The Qur’ān has further explained,

﴿وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ﴾

‘And good and evil cannot be equal’.²

The message here is that a wrong action should not receive a wrong reaction. Muslims should respond to a vice with virtue. When they hear something bad, they should reply to it with something good and beautiful. A beautiful act or saying effaces the odious act or saying, and permeates the environment with love and cooperation. Evil leads to disunity and division, while good leads to unity and strength. Evil conduct and wrong-doing generate hatred, while good conduct and piety bring about goodness, benevolence, love and harmony. That is the truth of *Iḥsān*. That is why God has ordained the Muslims to beg for ‘*ḥasana*’ in this world as well as in the Hereafter:

﴿رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ﴾

‘O our Lord, grant us excellence [*ḥasana*] in this world, and excellence in the Hereafter, and save us from the torment of Hell’.³

One must realize that in this verse, the word *ḥasana* does not only imply good deeds and acts of worship—because it is not possible to perform meritorious acts in the Hereafter—*ḥasana* means *Iḥsān* both here and Hereafter. In this Qur’ānic supplication, goodness, benevolence, beauty and conduct based on *Iḥsān* are requested. When we ask for ‘*ḥasana*’ in this life, we beg for a peaceful life,

¹ Ibid., 11:114.

² Ibid., 41:34.

³ Ibid., 2:201.

free of every evil, mischief, wrong-doing and strife. And when we beg for ‘*ḥasana*’ in the Hereafter, we beg for *Iḥsān*, which is superior to justice alone.

The *ḥasana* in this world refers to goodness and betterment and protection from evil and pain, and *ḥasana* in the Hereafter signifies emancipation and deliverance from torment, hardships on the Last Day, reckoning and Hell. This meaning of *ḥasana* has been elaborated by Anas b. Mālik’s saying, quoted by the Imams of Qur’ānic exegesis, including Ibn Kathīr. Similarly, Imam al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Wā’il, al-Suddī, Ibn Zayd, Qatāda, Muqātil, Sufyān al-Thawrī and Ibn Qutayba also maintain that *ḥasana* in this world connotes ‘knowledge, bounty, worship, expansion of sustenance and security and protection from every evil, mischief and disruption’. The *ḥasana* in the Hereafter implies ‘Paradise, forgiveness, and protection from torment and hardships’. In both cases, *ḥasana* means goodness, betterment, expansion, facility and protection. Deliverance is being implored from torment in both the worlds. This highlights the inherent meaning of goodness, and security that *Iḥsān* conveys.

Two modes of action have been described in the Qur’ān: justice and *Iḥsān*. God says,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَنِ﴾

‘Indeed, God enjoins justice and benevolence [towards everyone]’.¹

According to Imam al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, justice means that whatever is obligatory for man to give should be given, and whatever he has the right to take, he should take. *Iḥsān*, however, means to give more than is due and to take less than is one’s right. This conduct emphasizes benevolence when giving to others and taking from others. *Iḥsān* is, therefore, a higher grade than justice. Justice is due compensation while *Iḥsān* is added excellence. God says,

﴿هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَنِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَنُ﴾

¹ Ibid., 16:90.

‘And is the reward of good anything but good?’¹

That is what has been ordained. Someone who gives to others more than their due demonstrates *Iḥsān*, and God will reward him or her more than what is due. God says,

﴿لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْخَيْرُ وَأَزِيدُهُمْ﴾

‘For those who do pious works there is good recompense and more [added to it]’.²

The benevolent will be awarded Paradise and will also be awarded more than what is their due. The Qur’ānic exegetes have further elaborated the meaning of ‘more’ [*ziyāda*], and held that it implies the beholding of God’s Countenance.

By revealing to us his beautiful name of al-Salām, God shows us the meaning of peace that is inherent in Islam, and by revealing to us His name al-Mu’min, He highlights the inherent sense of peace and protection found in the word *īmān*. And how beautiful it is that God, after revealing the concept of *Iḥsān*, informed us that His names are all *ḥusnā* (beautiful)! He says,

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ﴾

‘And to God alone belong the most beautiful names [*al-asma’ al-ḥusnā*]’.³

The Qur’ān orders us to exemplify *Iḥsān* and benevolence and give others their rightful due. God says,

﴿وَأَدِّ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ﴾

‘And it should be paid in a graceful manner [*bi iḥsān*]’.⁴

God loves *Iḥsān* and blesses the people of *Iḥsān* with His companionship, saying,

¹ Ibid., 55:60.

² Ibid., 10:26.

³ Ibid., 7:180.

⁴ Ibid., 2:178.

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

‘Certainly, God is with the people of Iḥsān’.¹

He declares His love for them, saying,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

‘Certainly, God loves the people of Iḥsān’.²

He pronounces His guarantee for the people of Iḥsān that they will have His exclusive protection and divine shelter, and He declares them free of all blame,

﴿مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ﴾

‘The people of Iḥsān are not to be blamed’.³

God also says,

﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ﴾

‘And with regard to dīn, who is better than the one who submits his whole being entirely to God, while he also holds spiritual excellence?’⁴

Certainly, those who conduct themselves benevolently are the people of excellence. According to the Qur’ān, it was said to the Prophet Joseph ﷺ,

﴿إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

‘Surely, we see you one of the spiritually excellent [muḥsinīn]’.⁵

According to Abū Maṣṣūr al-Azharī and Ibn Maṣṣūr, a

¹ Ibid., 29:69.

² Ibid., 2:195.

³ Ibid., 9:91.

⁴ Ibid., 4:125.

⁵ Ibid., 12:36.

beautiful green tree is called *al-ḥasan*, because it provides coolness and pleasant shade to people. Even the mere sight of it pleases hearts. Due to its trait of benevolence, it is named *al-ḥasan*. According to Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī al-Jawharī in *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, the moon is also known as *al-ḥāsin* because its light shows the path to travellers, and the moonlit nights are a great source of soothing for those who are stricken with anxiety and concern. Moreover, the moon is a metaphor of light and light eliminates darkness. *Iḥsān* is, therefore, light, guidance, calm and comfort. This is why *Iḥsān* has been given the third and highest level in the religion. The zenith of Islam culminates in *Īmān* and the apex of *Īmān* is identified as *Iḥsān*. The hadith of Gabriel ﷺ verifies this hierarchy. Islam relates to verbal and physical obedience, while *Īmān* is its internal aspect, comprising the verification of the inner self and its commitment and conviction; and *Iḥsān* points to their spiritual fruition and inner states of divine love and beauty. *Iḥsān* bestows upon us authenticity and sincerity which ensure protection from disaster and extinction. It is for this reason that the Qurʾān regards *Iḥsān* as a way out of disaster. God says,

﴿وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

*‘And spend in the cause of God and do not cast yourselves into destruction with your own hands—and adopt spiritual excellence [Iḥsān]. Verily, God loves the spiritually excellent [muḥsinīn]’.*¹

Iḥsān is obligatory for everyone and in every matter, so much so that killing someone by torture, or even teasing an animal at the time of slaughter, are forbidden acts—as evidenced by the many prophetic traditions on this subject. Shaddād b. Aws رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الْإِحْسَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، فَإِذَا قَتَلْتُمْ فَاحْسِنُوا الْقِتْلَةَ، وَإِذَا ذَبَحْتُمْ
فَأَحْسِنُوا الذَّبْحَ، وَلْيَجِدْ أَحَدُكُمْ شَفَرَتَهُ، فَلْيُرْخِ ذَبِيحَتَهُ.

¹ Ibid., 2:195.

‘God has prescribed spiritual excellence in everything, so if you kill, do so with excellence, and if you sacrifice an animal, do so with excellence, and let one of you sharpen his blade, in order to set his sacrificial animal at rest [causing it the least discomfort]’.¹

Abū Shurayḥ al-Khuzāʿī رحمہ اللہ reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُحْسِنْ إِلَى جَارِهِ.

‘Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him behave with excellence towards his neighbour’.²

Abū Dharr رضی اللہ عنہ reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَيُّمَا كُنْتُ، وَأَتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمْحُهَا، وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ.

‘Fear God wherever you may be, follow up a bad deed with a good deed and it will efface it, and deal with

¹ Narrated by Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-ṣayd wa al-dhabāʾih wa mā yuʿkal min al-ḥayawān* [The Book of Hunting, Sacrificing Animals and What Animals May be Eaten], chapter: ‘The Injunction to Perform the Slaughter and Cutting well, and to Sharpen the Cutting Blade’, 3:1548 §1955; al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-diyāt* [The Book of Blood Money], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us About the Prohibition of Mutilation [*muthla*]’, 4:23 §1409; Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-ḍaḥāyā* [The Book of Sacrificial Animals], chapter: ‘The Prohibition of Keeping Animals Waiting, and the Injunction to Treat the Sacrificial Animals Gently’, 3:100 §2815; al-Nasāʾī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-ḍaḥāyā* [The Book of Sacrificial Animals], chapter: ‘The Injunction to Sharpen the Cutting Blade’, 7:227 §4405; and Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-ḍaḥāyā* [The Book of Sacrificial Animals], chapter: ‘When You Slaughter, You Must Perform the Slaughter Well’, 2:1058 §3170.

² Narrated by Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: ‘The Encouragement to Honour the Neighbour and the Guest, and the Necessity of Maintaining Silence Except when Having Something Good to Say’, 1:69 §48; Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Right Due of the Neighbour’, 2:1211 §3672; al-Dārimī in *al-Sunan*, 2:134; and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 22:192 §501.

people with good character’.¹

‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه reported, ‘A man said, “O Messenger of God! When shall I become spiritually excellent?” The Prophet ﷺ replied,

إِذَا قَالَ جِيرَانُكَ: أَنْتَ مُحْسِنٌ، فَأَنْتَ مُحْسِنٌ، وَإِذَا قَالُوا: إِنَّكَ مُسِيءٌ فَأَنْتَ مُسِيءٌ.

‘If your neighbours say, ‘You are spiritually excellent’, you are spiritually excellent, and if they say, ‘You are an evildoer’, then you are an evildoer’!²

Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

إِذَا جَمَعَ اللَّهُ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ يُنَادِي مُنَادٍ فِي صَعِيدٍ وَاحِدٍ مِنْ بُطْنَانِ الْعَرْشِ: أَيُّنَ الْمُحْسِنُونَ؟ قَالُوا: نَحْنُ الْمُحْسِنُونَ. قَالَ: صَدَقْتُمْ. قُلْتُ لَنَبِيِّ: ﴿مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ﴾ مَا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ، ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِي.

‘When God assembles the first and the last, a herald will call out from a plain under the pedestals of the Heavenly Throne: “Where are the people of spiritual excellence [*muḥsinūn*]?” . . . A group of people will say, “We are the spiritually excellent!” God will say, “You have told the truth! I said to My Prophet: ‘*The people of Iḥsān are not to be blamed*’.³ So there is no cause of reproach against you. Enter the Garden of Paradise with My Mercy”!’

¹ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and Filial Duty], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us About Social Interaction’, 4:355 §1987; al-Dārimī in *al-Sunan*, 2:415 §2791; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:153 §21392; Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 5:211 §25324; al-Bazzār in *al-Musnad*, 9:416 §4022; and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-kabir*, 20:144 §296. Abū ‘Isā [al-Tirmidhī] said, ‘This is a fine authentic tradition [*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*]’.

² Narrated by Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-zuhd* [The Book of Renunciation], chapter: ‘On Goodly Mention’, 2:1411 §§4222–3; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:284 §525; al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:534 §1399; and al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 7:85 §1399. Al-Ḥākim said, ‘This is a rigorously authentic [*ṣaḥīḥ*] tradition’.

³ Qur’ān 9:91.

Anas رضي الله عنه added, ‘Then, the Messenger of God ﷺ smiled and said,

لَقَدْ نَجَّاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ أَهْوَالِ بَوَائِقِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“Indeed, God will deliver them from the miseries and calamities of the Resurrection!”.¹

Jābir رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

إِنَّ مِنْ أَحَبِّكُمْ إِلَيَّ وَأَفْرَيْكُمْ مِنِّي مَجْلِسًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَحَاسِنُكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا.

‘Indeed, amongst the dearest of you to me, and those of you seated closest to me on the Day of Resurrection, are the finest of you in moral character’.²

‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَيُذْرِكُ بِحُسْنِ خُلُقِهِ دَرَجَةَ الصَّائِمِ الْقَائِمِ.

‘The believer will surely attain, by the excellence of his moral character, the degree of the one steadfast in prayers and fasting’.³

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

حُرِّمَ عَلَى النَّارِ كُلُّ هَيْنٍ، سَهْلٍ، قَرِيبٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ.

‘The Hellfire is forbidden for every mild-mannered and

¹ Narrated by Abū Nu‘aym in *Kitāb al-arba‘īn*, p. 100 §51; and al-Munāwī in *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, 1:420 §4.

² Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and Filial Duty], chapter: ‘What Has Come to Us Concerning the Nobility of Lofty Character’, 4:370 §2018; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:185 and 217 §§6735, 7035; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:235 §485; and al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 6:234 §799. Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said, ‘This is a sound [*ḥasan*] tradition’.

³ Narrated by Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘On Goodness of Character’, 4:252 §4798; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 6:90 §24639; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:228 §480; al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:128 §199; and al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 6:236 §7997.

even-tempered person who is close to people'.¹

‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

يَا عَائِشَةُ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ؛ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ فِي الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ.

‘O ‘Ā’isha, God is Gentle and Kind and He loves gentleness in everything’.²

In another narration she reported that he ﷺ said,

يَا عَائِشَةُ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ وَيُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ، وَيُعْطِي عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ.

‘O ‘Ā’isha, God is Gentle and He loves gentleness. He bestows for the sake of gentleness what He does not bestow due to harshness’.³

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

كَانَ تَاجِرٌ يُدَايِنُ النَّاسَ، فَإِذَا رَأَى مُعْسِرًا، قَالَ لِغُلَامَيْهِ: تَجَاوَزُوا عَنْهُ، لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَتَجَاوَزَ عَنَّا، فَتَجَاوَزَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

‘There was a merchant who used to give people credit. When he saw someone in difficulty, he would say to his employees: “Make allowances for him, so that perhaps God will make allowances for us”. So as a result, God

¹ Narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 1:415 §3938; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:215 §469; al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muḥjam al-kabīr*, 10:231 §10562; Abū Ya‘lā in *al-Musnad*, 8:467 §5053; and al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 7:353 §2697.

² Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb istitāba al-murtaddīn wa al-mu‘ānīdīn wa qitālihim* [The Book on Demanding the Repentance of the Apostates and Reprobates, and Fighting Them], chapter: ‘What is to be Done When a Non-Muslim Citizen [or Anyone Else] Presents Himself’, 6:2539 §6528; and Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘On Kindness’, 2:1216 §3688.

³ Narrated by Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], chapter: ‘The Virtue of Gentleness’, 4:2003 §2593; Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], chapter: ‘On Gentleness’, 4:254 §4807; and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 1:112 §902.

made allowances for him'.¹

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه also reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

إِنَّ رَجُلًا لَمْ يَعْمَلْ خَيْرًا قَطُّ وَكَانَ يُدَايِنُ النَّاسَ. فَيَقُولُ لِرَسُولِهِ: خُذْ مَا تَيْسَّرَ وَاتْرِكْ مَا عَسَرَ، وَتَجَاوَزْ لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى أَنْ يَتَجَاوَزَ عَنَّا. فَلَمَّا هَلَكَ، قَالَ اللَّهُ لَهُ: هَلْ عَمِلْتَ خَيْرًا قَطُّ؟ قَالَ: لَا، إِلَّا أَنَّهُ كَانَ لِي غُلَامٌ، وَكُنْتُ أُدَايِنُ النَّاسَ، فَإِذَا بَعَثْتُهُ لِيَتَقَضَى، قُلْتُ لَهُ: خُذْ مَا تَيْسَّرَ وَاتْرِكْ مَا عَسَرَ، وَتَجَاوَزْ لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يَتَجَاوَزَ عَنَّا. قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: قَدْ تَجَاوَزْتُ عَنْكَ.

‘There was a man who was extremely lax in performing good deeds and he used to loan money to people. [When he would loan money out] he would say to his secretary, “Take [in repayment of a loan] that which is easy and leave that which is difficult and overlook it, for perhaps God Most High will overlook us [our faults]”. When that man perished, God Most High said to him, “Did you ever do any good deeds?” The man replied, “No, but I did have a young servant and I used to loan money to people, so when I would send him to collect the money owed, I would say to him, ‘Take that which is easy and leave that which is difficult and overlook it, for perhaps God Most High will overlook us’.” God then said to him, “I have overlooked your faults”.’²

¹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-buyūʿ* [The Book of Sales], chapter: ‘On Someone Giving a Person in Difficulties Time to Pay’, 2:731 §1972; Muslim in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-musāqāt* [The Book of Sharecropping], chapter: ‘The Virtue of Giving a Person in Difficulties Time to Pay’, 3:1196 §1562.

² Narrated by al-Nasāʾī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-buyūʿ* [The Book of Sales], chapter: ‘On Dealing with Others Well and Being Kind in Seeking Repayment of Loans’, 7:381 §3696; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:361 §8715; Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Shaḥīḥ*, 11:422 §5403; and al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 2:33 §2223.

I.8 SUMMARY

This lexical research has demonstrated that the three levels of our *dīn*, Islam, *Īmān* and *Iḥsān*, are synonymous with peace and security, safety and protection, tolerance and forbearance, love and affection, benevolence and human dignity, and all their resultant pleasures. Islam is a perfect and complete code of life that ensures protection, mercy, clemency, patience, tolerance, balance, justice and moderation for all. A Muslim, therefore, is the one who embodies peace, sanctity and protection for the whole of humankind. A *mu'min* is the one who, at the same time, possesses the traits of human dignity, coexistence, tolerance, moderation and love and peace. And a *muḥsin* is the one who is a blend of the first two levels along with the spiritual and divine experiences that are useful for others. In sum, Islam, in its wider perspective, is a religion that ensures peace and security for everyone at all levels, individually and collectively.